

School Committee Meeting Minutes  
Lura A. White School  
October 14, 2003

Present: Donald Parker, Chairperson  
Bob Prescott  
Hugh Muffoletto  
Gary Bourassa  
Paul Wilson

Also Present: Dr. Thomas Scott, Superintendent  
Patricia Stern, Business Manager  
Thomas Walsh, SPED Director

Meeting was called to order at 7:50 pm.

Public Participation:

As there was no public participation the meeting moved to discuss old business.

A motion was made to approve the minutes of September 23, 2003. Motion seconded and approved.

The committee moved on to discuss the 2003 MCAS information. Dr. Scott reviewed the results by grade level. Grade 8 Mathematics results showed a significant increase in the number of students scoring at the Advanced (21%) and Proficient (29%) levels. While the percent of students at Warning (25%) has decreased, it is still too high. Half of the 17 students who are at Warning are handicapped. Grade 8 Science showed dramatic improvement in scores. 47% scored Advanced/Proficient compared to 32% statewide.

Grade 7 English-Language Arts scores were excellent. The number of students scoring in Advanced or Proficient was 70%, representing a steady improvement over the past three years. 23% of these students are handicapped, compared with 17% statewide. Ten of the 12 students at Warning are handicapped.

Grade 6 Mathematics scores rose from 2001 to 2002, and then dramatically declined in 2003. A first year teacher without certification in mathematics taught grade 6 math last year.

Excellent scores for Grade 5 Science reflected 59% of the students at Advanced/Proficient levels. The four students who failed were within a few points of passing and all were handicapped.

Over 6 years scores for Grade 4 English-Language Arts have been improving while the average scale score for 2002 and 2003 has stayed the same at 238. The leveling off of the

score could be a result of having an extraordinarily high percentage of handicapped students (31%), nearly double the state average of 17%. Grade 4 Mathematics performance has been inconsistent from year to year for the past 6 years. After a solid increase in 2002, scores dropped in 2003. The high number of handicapped students pulled the scores down. An action plan has been developed to turn these numbers around.

Grade 3 English-Language Arts scores have been relatively consistent over three years. Three classes did very well. One class did very poorly pulling down the scores.

A math action plan was reviewed. Teachers have been given all the data to review so that they may find out the problem areas and those students who need extra attention. Also a committee of teachers have formed together to review commercial math programs so that they may recommend to Dr. Scott by December 1, 2003 which program may best help the students. A consultant who has previously worked with the teachers will also be back this year as a curriculum coordinator. Currently, teachers are looking into the possibility of purchasing of MCAS preparation workbooks to better prepare the students. Middle school students will also be instructed in flexible skill groups.

District Goals will be discussed later on in the meeting.

Patricia Stern presented the transportation update with information provided by Hope Ball, District Manager of First Student. From data collected over a three day period it appears that both elementary and middle school runs are running well under an hour. Only one route, a high school run, has students on the bus for over an hour. The primary reason for that is that this particular route picked up part of another route in order to assure that the bus would be back in time to pick up the younger students.

One parent commented that his child has to walk a distance in order to catch the high school bus. He was also concerned about his child not being able to participate in extracurricular activities as there is no late bus to pick up the students.

The committee moved on to discuss the usage of temporary trailers for those children needing SPED services. Patricia Stern presented three quotes to the committee members for the lease of one trailer for a minimum of two months. The quotes ranged from \$15,000.00 to \$25,000.00; however the least expensive quote did not include the use or building of a ramp that the SPED department has stated it will need. Additional insurance and electrical costs will also need to be included in the costs of the trailer. Currently the fire department and board of health are working to ensure that the trailer meets all safety concerns. Installation would take 3 or more weeks. The committee members feel that all bills associated with the trailer might be covered by the School Building Committee as the costs are a result of not being able to occupy the Shirley Middle School. The committee accepted the superintendent's recommendation not to lease the trailer.

The annual MASC/MASS joint conference is scheduled for November 12-14. No committee members were interested in attending.

The meeting progressed to discuss a thank-you letter from a school choice parent who has moved from the area.

Also discussed was the enrollment numbers for the district. Out of 761 students, 33 students are from the Devens community and 80 are school choice students.

The meeting went into executive session.

A motion was made to end the meeting at 9:30 p.m. Motion was seconded and approved.

Respectfully submitted by Karen Gutheil